



# Harbinger

SPRINGFIELD CONSERVATION NATURE CENTER VOL. 18 NO. 6

Trapping was a way of life during the time of Lewis & Clark. Many livelihoods depended upon it, although trapping has now become a lost art to many. Trappers lose hours of sleep to work a trap line which includes days starting at 4:30 am, enduring cold and wet weather, hard physical work, and often empty traps. Equipment preparation and time spent scouting can turn trapping into a year-round activity.

My father introduced me to trapping when I was in second grade. My first trap was a "number one foothold long spring" that was rather old and rusty but in good working condition. I purchased a \$5 trapping permit with my paper route money and was ready to go.

I was excited because I knew muskrats were bringing \$5 each and I had seen them at a nearby creek. This creek was very familiar to me because of the countless hours I had spent there catching crawdads and insects, fishing, and exploring. I picked an ear of corn along the way to bait my trap. At the creek, I jumped to one of the small islands and set the trap underneath some overhanging vegetation. On previous scouting trips, I had seen tracks and a muskrat swimming by this spot.

The following day before school, I raced to the creek to check my trap. I was disappointed to find that neither the trap nor the bait had been disturbed. The next day I found the same result. The third morning I heard a chain rattling and saw movement. I caught something! I moved the brush aside and saw gray fur and a hairless, round tail. Hmm. It was not a muskrat but a field rat! I learned about wildlife from my father, but he never mentioned anything about trapping a field rat. Since he hadn't said they were worth anything, I released it and reset the trap.

On one occasion during a summer fishing outing, I was able to reach through exposed tree roots and grab a muskrat by its tail. At the base of the roots stood my dad with a fishing net and on the count of three, I released it. The muskrat ran beneath the net and escaped in the river. Not until years later did I realize, or suspect, that Dad

## Trapping Matters

intentionally raised the net to allow the muskrat to escape. As a young boy, I didn't consider the consequences of catching an animal out of season. Fortunately, I had good guidance.

That first trapping season, I caught three more field rats before my high hopes dwindled. Then two weeks into the season, I caught my first muskrat. Proud and overjoyed that I had finally caught a muskrat, I felt like a successful trapper. The following Saturday, Dad drove my brother and me to Zachary's Trading Post where I was able to sell my muskrat and collect \$5. I then used the money to purchase another trap. That first season resulted in two muskrats and six field rats. Those early years were very experimental and I learned through trial and error.

In anticipation of each new trapping season, scouting for signs of wildlife became a favorite pastime. Each track or mud slide found along the creek's banks caught my curiosity. Tracks were mysteries to me that needed solving. I determined where muskrats were going, what they were doing, and what they were eating. I observed how wildlife behavior patterns changed with weather changes. I found that raccoon activity increased during rainy weather. On drives home after dark, I loved searching for reflective eyes from raccoons along the roadsides. I took full advantage of fresh snowfalls by following fox tracks for miles to learn about their travel patterns and home ranges. I found that they preferred to travel

parallel to fence and tree lines and about twenty to thirty feet from them. This new information brought my success rate up considerably. As the years progressed, I became more experienced, bought more traps, pursued other furbearers, and spent even more time in the field trapping and scouting.

Trapping season lasts for only three short months, but for an avid trapper it continues throughout the year with equipment preparation, field observation, and learning from the environment. For me, trapping is a way to play an active role in nature.

~~Rudy  
Martinez



# Chipping In . . . Bob and Ruby Ball

Our congratulations go to Volunteer Naturalist Bob Ball and Volunteer Specialist Ruby Ball upon receiving the Mary Horton Memorial RSVP Volunteer Award. They have volunteered at the nature center since 1995. A few of the nature center's volunteers participate in a community volunteer program called RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program). This group started in Springfield in 1974 to "engage persons 55 and older in volunteer services to meet critical community needs." For the last three years, an area volunteer has been

chosen to receive the Mary Horton Memorial RSVP Volunteer Award at the fall recognition banquet. Volunteers are nominated by their agency based on their love of people and volunteerism, a positive attitude, commitment and willingness to volunteer, as well as their ability to recruit new volunteers.

Bob has accumulated 3,500 hours of service. He teaches photography workshops and presents programs on ecology, natural history, and birding. He has written several articles for the *Missouri Conservationist* magazine and his photographs have accompanied the

pieces. His photo exhibit, *Salamanders of Missouri*, has been on display at all of the conservation nature centers in the state. His spectacular photographs grace the Conservation Department's *Natural Events Calendar*. Bob and Ruby present a monarch butterfly program each fall that showcases his striking photography and their extensive natural history knowledge.

Ruby has reached 2,300 hours of service. She is in charge of the native flower gardens at the nature center. She designs the gardens and does most of the maintenance to keep them looking attractive. She has presented sessions on butterfly gardening at the nature center's annual Naturescaping Symposium. She also maintains several flower beds at Living Memorial Park, located near the nature center.

Bob and Ruby are also long-time members of the Greater Ozarks Audubon Society and have held several offices in this organization. They work tirelessly to recruit new volunteers and promote conservation education. You might find Bob leading a field trip to an area birding hot spot or Ruby working on a habitat restoration project along Springfield's South Creek. In short, Bob and Ruby Ball are volunteers who put their hands and hearts into volunteer work and deserve to be congratulated for chipping in.

## The View From The Bridge

The verdict is in—Missouri's deer population is exceeding the available habitat. While most Missourians will agree that seeing a deer bounding through the forests and fields adds to the aesthetic value of an outing, many Missourians also see a large number of deer dead along the highways from collisions with vehicles or report deer damage to their crops or yards.

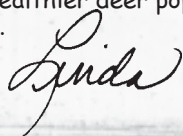
Through extensive research and input from the public this past year which included meetings, letters, e-mails, and random surveys of deer hunters and landowners, five deer herd management strategies to shift the harvest pressure from bucks to does were evaluated and discussed. The strategy receiving the greatest support was antler-point restriction which has been implemented in 29 counties in northern and central Missouri. In these counties, only bucks with a minimum of four antler points on one side may be taken. This will put more hunting pressure on does and allow the younger males a better chance to reach their prime. Since the female deer produce next year's young, the harvest of does regulates both the size and growth rate of the deer herd. Accordingly, the number of firearm and archery hunting permits available for antlerless deer is far more numerous this year.

Also new this year was an increase in the number of counties open for the urban portion of the firearms deer season which was October 8 to 11. Greene, Christian, and Webster counties were included in the 11 counties open for antlerless deer where numbers needed to be reduced. Hunters were required to follow city and county ordinances regarding trespass and hunting methods.

If successful hunters are left with more deer meat than they can use, they can share nutritious venison with needy Missourians through the Share the Harvest program. Last year, 88 tons of venison were donated.

Finally, the Conservation Department will continue to monitor for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in 54 counties during the opening weekend of deer season. Hunters will be asked to take a few extra minutes at the check station to let wildlife officials remove a gland from their deer for testing. All test results from 2002 and 2003 have been negative for CWD. This disease affects the nervous system, primarily the brain, of deer and elk and has been recognized for more than 30 years, mostly in western states. During this time, there have been no cases of CWD spreading from deer or elk to humans or livestock. We appreciate hunters who participate in this voluntary program to help ensure that CWD doesn't get a foothold in Missouri.

Successful deer management requires support and partnership between conservation officials, all Missourians, and, most importantly, hunters. All of these strategies combined equal healthier deer populations. And that's something we can all agree on.



Linda F. Chorice  
Nature Center Manager

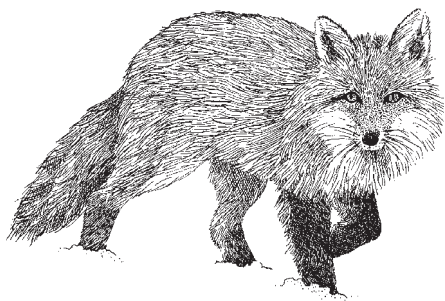
## Thank you . . .

The nature center would like to thank Richard Bode, Brandi Jenkins, Carla Nichols, and Dave Turner for donating various natural objects; Art Daniels for program supplies; Westlake Ace Hardware for bird seed; and the Discovery Center for the loan of hissing cockroaches for Insect-O-Rama.

## Volunteer Milestones

Bob Ball	3500 Hours
Art Daniels	400 Hours
Mary Mangler	400 Hours
Joyce Tolliver	400 Hours
Shane Thomas	300 Hours
Drew Albert	200 Hours
Mike Baird	100 Hours
Brandi Bristol	100 Hours
Linda Brown	100 Hours
Kimberly Duquette	100 Hours
Larry Scriven	100 Hours





# Events November

For programs requiring registration, call 888-4237.

Registration for all programs begins the first day of the month.

## 1 Cable Restraint Course Monday, 6-9pm and Tuesday, 6-9pm

Cable restraint devices hold animals alive and allow trappers to release non-target animals unharmed. The devices can be used to take furbearers from December 15 through February 15. This Cable Restraint Course is mandatory for those wishing to purchase a cable restraint permit. All ages. You must attend both Monday and Tuesday evening. *Call today to register.*

## 5 Hunter Education Friday, 6-9pm and Saturday, 8am-5pm

This 10-hour course is required for anyone born after January 1, 1967, who wants to hunt with firearms in Missouri. This course is continued on Saturday from 8am to 5pm (lunch break given—lunch not provided). You must pass a written test to be certified. Ages 11-adult. *Call today to register.*

## 6 Hiking Club Saturday, 8am-5pm

Join Volunteer Naturalist Doug Gilliam for a hike at Hercules Glade Wilderness. Meet at the nature center and carpool. Pack a sack lunch, bring water, and wear sturdy, comfortable hiking shoes. Hike is approximately four miles and of moderate difficulty. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

## Hiked It . . . Liked It Saturday, 9-11am

Enjoy a naturalist-guided hike. Families.

## Still Life Songbirds In Wood Saturday, 9am-4pm

Enjoy the wood carvings of Marshfield artist Thomas E. Farr. Farr will be demonstrating his craft, displaying his lifelike carved songbirds, and selling carved feathers. Drop by anytime.

## 7 Still Life Songbirds In Wood Sunday, 11am-4pm [Same as November 6]

## 10 Story Time With Ms. Ladybug Wednesday, 11-11:30am

Join Volunteer Naturalist Linda Brown as she reads a nature story. Ages 2-6.

## 20 Conservation TEEN Club Furbearer Trapping Saturday, 9-11am

Come learn the basics of furbearer trapping including how to identify local furbearers and how to effectively set leg-hold traps. We'll also discover why trapping is an important tool in managing furbearer populations. Ages 12-17. Registration required.

## Conservation TEEN Club Trapping Overnight Saturday, Noon to Sunday, 3pm

Come venture out to track and capture furbearers on a local conservation area. After scouting the area for furbearer signs, participants will be setting leg-hold traps. We'll pitch camp, spend the night, and check traps at first light. Participants must attend the morning session of "Furbearer Trapping" and possess a Resident Trapping Permit (\$10) to attend. Ages 12-17. Registration required.

## Digital Photography 101 Saturday, 1-3pm

Thinking about buying a digital camera or already have one but find it a little confusing? Join Volunteer Naturalist Bob Ball to learn how to use these versatile cameras that can rival conventional equipment. Nature photography will be emphasized. If you already have a digital camera, feel free to bring it. Ages 12-adult. Registration required.

## 21 For Adults Only Shotgun Shooting Trap Sunday, 1-5pm

Meet at the Andy Dalton Shooting Range at the Bois D'Arc Conservation Area for an afternoon of shotgun instruction, firearm safety, and shooting practice at clay targets. Shotguns and shells will be provided. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

## 23 Conservation Kids' Club The Calls Of The Wild Tuesday, 6:30-7:45pm

Nationally-known wildlife caller and special guest Ralph Duren stops by to share his wildlife knowledge and animal calls. Join in the fun and find out that animal communication is a "hoot!" Ages 7-12 only. Please, only one adult per group of kids and no younger siblings. Registration required.

## 27 Ozark Whittlers & Woodcarvers Saturday, 10am-4pm

Stop by anytime to watch members of the Ozark Whittlers & Woodcarvers transform wood into treasures.

## Volunteer Naturalist Interest Meeting

Monday, November 15, 7-8pm

We are looking for a few enthusiastic, nature-oriented people who are over the age of 18 and willing to contribute an average of 12 hours a month. Volunteer Naturalists patrol trails, answer questions, staff the visitor information desk, help with gift shop organization and sales, present conservation education programs, and assist with special projects. If one or all of these jobs appeals to you, plan on attending this informational meeting to learn more about the volunteer program.

Videos are shown each Sunday from 2-3pm



## Events

# December

For programs requiring registration, call 888-4237.

Registration for all programs begins the first day of the month.

### **3** Hunter Education *Friday, 6-9pm and Saturday, 8am-5pm*

This 10-hour course is required for anyone born after January 1, 1967, who wants to hunt with firearms in Missouri. This course is continued on Saturday from 8am to 5pm (lunch break given—lunch not provided). You must pass a written test to be certified. Ages 11-adult. *Call today to register.*

### **4** Hiked It . . . Liked It *Saturday, 9-11am*

Enjoy a naturalist-guided hike. Families.

### **8** Story Time With Ms. Ladybug *Wednesday, 11-11:30am*

Join Volunteer Naturalist Joyce Tolliver as she reads a nature story. Ages 2-6.

### **10** Evening Stroll *Friday, 6-9pm*

You've seen the fancy flashing light displays all over town—now come out for a quieter, old-fashioned holiday evening. Enjoy a crackling fire and hot cider and browse through the gift shop when you come indoors to warm up. The trails will be opened and patrolled, so bring a flashlight because you're on your own.

### **Symbols Of The Season** *Friday, 7-8pm*

Join Outdoor Skills Specialist Regina Knauer as she greets the winter solstice with firelight, folklore, and fables surrounding some of the natural symbols of the season. Plan to stay afterwards and walk the trails, too. Families.

### **11** Hiking Club *Saturday, 8am-4pm*

Never get lost again! During this class, you'll learn the basics of using a compass and topographic maps. After honing your skills in the classroom, we'll carpool to a local forest where you can put your new-found knowledge to the test. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

Videos are shown each  
Sunday from 2-3pm

### **16** For Adults Only Beginning Fly-tying *Thursday, 6-8pm*

Members of the Missouri Trout Fishermen's Association will demonstrate basic fly-tying techniques and lead participants through steps to make flies. Learn how combinations of feathers, yarn, and thread can imitate insects or other food that will fool a fish. No fly-fishing or fly-tying experience required. Ages 18-adult. Registration required.

### **18** Conservation Kids' Club Holiday Crafts For Kids *Saturday, 10-11:30am or 11:30am-1pm*

Hey, kids! Here's your chance to make natural presents for your holiday gift giving. You just need a little creativity and a few materials to recycle—we'll supply the rest. Please bring the following items: a large paper sack, a 29-ounce tin can (the size peaches and pumpkin come in), and a Phillips screwdriver with your name written on it. Ages 7-12 years. Please, no younger siblings. Registration required.

### **Ozark Whittlers & Woodcarvers** *Saturday, 10am-4pm*

Stop by anytime to watch members of the Ozark Whittlers & Woodcarvers transform wood into treasures.

### **Conservation TEEN Club** Year-End Review

*Saturday, 3-4:30pm*

Join us as we celebrate the close of another successful year of TEEN Club. After viewing a slide show of the year's outings, we'll enjoy cake and vote on possible TEEN Club outings for 2005. Prospective and current members, ages 12-17, and their families are welcome to attend. Registration required.

### **19** Close-Up Nature Photography *Sunday, 1:30-4:30pm*

Take a closer look at nature with Volunteer Naturalist Art Daniels to learn the techniques and equipment used for macro photography. Bring a 35mm SLR camera, tripod, and any close-up equipment you have. Ages 15-adult. Registration required.

### **28** Winter Bird Walk *Tuesday, 9-10:30am*

Not all birds have flown south for the winter. Dress warmly and join Volunteer Naturalists Mary Murphy and Liz Behle for a stroll on the trails in search of winter birds. Bring binoculars and field guides if you have them. Ages 7-adult. Registration required.

### **Toddler Tales**

*Tuesday, 10-10:30 or 11-11:30am*

Bring your tots to hear a special tale and to complete a craft project.

### **Snowflake Hike** *Tuesday, 1-2pm*

Join a guided hike to search for signs of winter—and maybe a snowflake or two!

### **29** Toddler Tales

*Wednesday, 10-10:30am  
or 11-11:30am*

[Same as December 28]

### **Snowflake Hike**

*Wednesday, 1-2pm*

[Same as December 28]

### **Snakes Of Missouri**

*Wednesday, 2-3pm*

Whether you find snakes attractive or not, you will find yourself attracted to the real scoop on the lifestyle of these rodent-eating reptiles. Get a close look at some live Missouri serpents.

### **Feeder Frenzy**

*Wednesday, 3-4pm*

Join one of our bird expert Volunteer Naturalists in the Wildlife Viewing Area to find out what birds are coming to the feeders on a cold winter afternoon.

### **30** Discovery Table Missouri Mammals

*Thursday, 9am-4pm*

Visit this hands-on display to see if you can identify animals using only the fur and bones as clues.

### **Snowflake Hike** *Thursday, 1-2pm*

[Same as December 28]

### **Backyard Bird Bed & Breakfast** *Thursday, 3-4pm*

Birds can easily be attracted to your backyard. Join Volunteer Naturalist Bob Ball to learn some of the best ways to make your yard inviting to your feathered friends. Ages 10-adult. Registration required.



## Little Acorns . . .

**Little Acorns** programs are for children 3-6 years and are 45-minutes in length. Please limit **Little Acorns** programs to one per month. Registration begins the first day of the month.

### November

#### Wonderful Whitetails

We all know Bambi, but what do we know about real deer? Where do they live? What do they eat? Come for some antler-related antics and learn some of the wonders of the whitetails.

**Tuesday, November 9, 1pm**

**Friday, November 12, 1pm**

#### Turkey Time

Time to talk turkey! Tote the tots in for a fun and factual look at wild turkeys. We'll have a gobbling good time crafting a "turkey" to take home.

**Wednesday, November 17, 6pm**

**Thursday, November 18, 11am or 1pm**

#### Foxes In The Fields And Forests

What kind of foxes lives in the fields? What kind lives in the forests? Pounce on this program to find out facts about fox families. Fold an origami fox and make a fox "face" to take home

**Saturday, November 27,**

**11am, 1pm, or 3pm**

### December

#### Wily Coyote

Howl like a coyote and hear some coyote folklore. Learn why the cunning nature of this animal has earned it the nickname "trickster."

**Wednesday, December 15, 11am or 1pm**

**Friday, December 17, 11am**

#### Cobweb Christmas

Listen to the holiday story, *The Cobweb Christmas*, by Shirley Climo and make your own beautiful craft to take home.

**Tuesday, December 21,**

**11am, 1pm, or 3pm**

*The nature center building and area will be closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.*



## The Nature Nook Gift Shop

**Fox in the Forest** is the featured publication being offered at a 20 percent discount in the gift shop.

Introduce children to the amazing array of life in Missouri forests by reading aloud this colorful Missouri Department of Conservation book written by Lorna Domke and illustrated by wildlife artist David Besenger. It's the story of a gray fox kit that sets out one spring morning and meets all sorts of flying, crawling and running creatures, including a luna moth, tiger salamander, box turtle, and white-tailed deer.



### Nature Nook Gift Shop Holiday Hours

Stop by and browse through the gift shop for holiday gift-giving ideas. The gift shop is open daily from 8am to 5pm, but will be closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. Special shopping hours from 6 to 9pm on Friday, December 10.

### Temporary Display November/December . . .

Photography Display by **Southwest Missouri Camera Club**



### Harbinger Highlights . . .

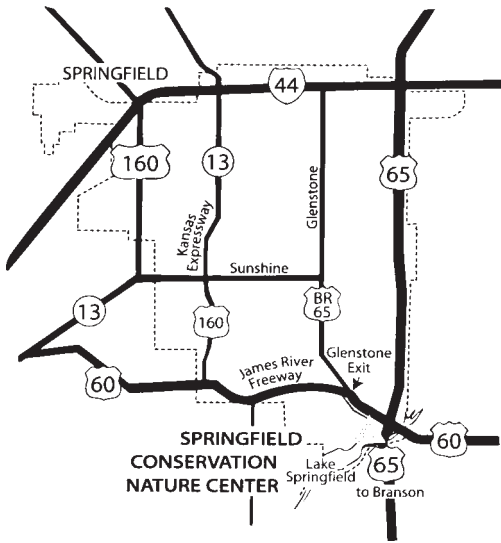
Defined, harbinger (pronounced här'bīn-jər) is anything that foreshadows a future event; omen; sign. Though winter won't officially arrive until December 21, we'll experience some of its harshness in the form of chilly winds and probably even snow long before that date. As many people prepare to endure the season indoors, furbearer trappers look forward to the frigid temperatures that mean trapping season is approaching.

Beaver trapping season lasts from November 15 until March 31. Before trapping seasons were regulated, the beaver population was decimated by trapping and hunting. With the strict guidelines that now govern trapping, beaver numbers have increased dramatically. Today, they are still pursued for their luxurious pelts and delicious meat.

River otter trapping season runs from November 15 until February 15 or 20 (depending on location). After being reintroduced to Missouri in the 1980s and 90s, the river otter population has boomed and now stands at around 15,000 animals. Biologists encourage the regulated trapping of otters to control their population and reduce conflicts with humans.

In addition to foothold traps, foxes and coyotes may be trapped this year with cable restraints from December 15 until February 15.

This system, only recently made legal in Missouri, holds animals alive and unharmed. In order to use cable restraints, you must attend a training session and purchase a cable restraint permit (\$25). Contact your local MDC office for more details.



**HOURS**—The area is open daily 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. from March 1 to October 31, and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. during the remainder of the year. The building is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. year 'round. The building and area are closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. The area is closed to pets, bicycles, roller blades, hunting, fishing, collecting, and alcoholic beverages. No fees are charged.

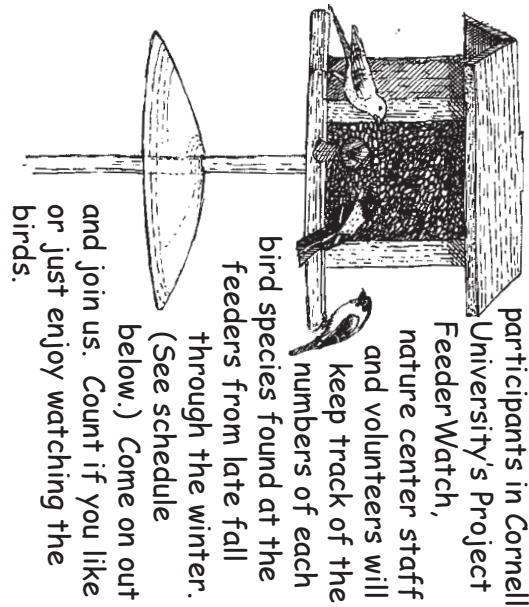
## STAFF

### SPRINGFIELD CONSERVATION NATURE CENTER

Linda Chorce ..... Manager  
 April Dozier ..... Interpretive Programs Supervisor  
 Kim Banner ..... Naturalist  
 James Dixon ..... Naturalist  
 Donna Legg ..... Naturalist  
 Rudy Martinez ..... Naturalist  
 Debbie Baker ..... Office Supervisor  
 Nelda Hendrix ..... Administrative Staff Assistant  
 Cole Chatman ..... General Clerk  
 Paula Mangan ..... Maintenance  
 Eric McMillan ..... Maintenance  
 Dave Rutledge ..... Maintenance  
 Mike Tillman ..... Maintenance  
 Mike Wilson ..... Maintenance

## Here's Lookin' At Ya

Not only are we watching our winter birds but we're counting them as well. As



participants in Cornell University's Project Feeder Watch, nature center staff and volunteers will keep track of the numbers of each bird species found at the feeders from late fall through the winter. (See schedule below.) Come on out and join us. Count if you like or just enjoy watching the birds.

### Project Feeder Watch

#### Count Dates:

Nov 23/24	Feb 1/2
Dec 7/8	Feb 15/16
Dec 21/22	March 1/2
Jan 4/5	March 15/16
Jan 18/19	March 29/30



*Eagle Days are coming . . .  
 January 22 and 23*

The nature center building and area will be closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

<<http://www.MissouriConservation.com>>

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